



## THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2025

### MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION

Antoinette Beekye	apologies	Staff Member
John Bell	present	Member
Paul Butler	present	Member, Chair of the Corporation, Safeguarding Champion
Simon Deschenes	present	Member
Janet Gardner	present	Member, Principal & Chief Executive Member
Andrew Hall	apologies	Member, sustainability champion
Susannah Hume	present	Member, SEND Champion
Thamilarasi Jasitharan	present	Staff Member
Remi Iyun	present	Member, EDI Champion
Bryan Johnston	apologies	Member
Alison Morris	present	Member, Corporation Vice Chair, Chair of C & Q, Skills Champion
Renatta Nzomono	present	Member, Chair of A & R
Amir Seyyad	present	Member, Chair of F & R
Leon Smith	present	Member, Health & Safety Champion
Gbeminiyi Soyinka	present	Member
Ridoan Hoque	present	Student Member
Kwasi Owusu-Mensah	apologies	Student Member

### CLERK TO THE CORPORATION

Naomi Shoffman                      Director of Governance (DoGov)

### IN ATTENDANCE

Jack McCabe	Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ)
Abena Rodman -Tay	Deputy Principal Finance & Resources (DPFR)
Melanie Price	Director of HR (DoHR)
Amir Ahmed	Vice Principal (VP)
Nadeem Khalifa	Director of BIDU (DoBIDU)

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) the Corporation agreed that meetings may be held using Teams videoconferencing as per the Waltham Forest College Instrument & Articles, Instrument 1 (g).

### 01.25 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

i. The Chair, formally opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. He highlighted the importance of this Corporation meeting, which provided an opportunity to evaluate progress, address challenges, and ensure strategic alignment for the upcoming year.

ii. Apologies were received from Mr Johnston due to a last minute work commitment and Mr Owusu-Mensah due to personal commitments.

The Chair reminded everyone that the papers will be taken as read, most of which have been through committee, and asked that presenters highlight key points in their reports in order to allow sufficient time for discussion debate and discussions.

#### **02.25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None

#### **03.25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS CORPORATION MEETING 17 DECEMBER 2024**

i The Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 17 December 2024, were agreed by the Corporation to be signed by the Chair as a true record.

The DoGov confirmed that all actions have either been completed or have not yet reached target date.

#### **ii. Chair's Action Report:– Staffing Agency Tender**

The Chair reported the recent Chair's action taken regarding the staffing agency tender. It was noted that the tender process had been circulated to all members and approved without any objections. The Chair emphasised the importance of transparency and proper documentation in these actions.

#### **04.25 MATTERS ARISING**

None

#### **05.25 PRINCIPAL'S COLLEGE REPORT**

The Principal presented a thorough overview of recent developments, challenges, and achievements across the college. The Principal highlighted the following points:

- **Funding Challenges:** Reduction in adult education funding (phased 1.65% cut over two years); mitigated by growth in the 16–18 cohort.
- **Collaboration:** Close work with the GLA to manage funding impacts on behalf of the sector.
- **Capital Delivery:** Swimming pool redevelopment completed on time and budget; repurposed for multi-use, showcasing value-for-money and highly sustainable using green technologies.
- **KPIs:**
  - Retention: Above year-end target.
  - Attendance: Slightly below target; new staff being supported.
  - University Progression: Increase in Russell Group applications.
  - Apprenticeships: Significantly improved, now near national benchmark; team commended.
  - Additional Qualifications: 43.2% achievement rate contributing to employability and progression.
- **Competitions:** Third place overall in a regional inter-college competition; first place in some areas, success in health, bricklaying, and hairdressing, with job offers through apprenticeships extended.
- **Partnerships:**
  - Employer Engagement: Strong turnout at January event with Deputy Mayor for Business & Growth in attendance.
  - HE Collaboration: University partnership discussions ongoing; concerns raised about one nearby institution's performance.
- **Sector Leadership:** Recognition for governance and teaching research.
  - **Ofsted Framework Consultation:** The college has reviewed the draft Ofsted inspection framework and expressed concerns over its complexity and limited accessibility for parents and employers. Stakeholders are being encouraged to respond to the consultation, the DPC&Q will submit response from the college.

- **Sustainability and Inclusion:** The college is progressing in its green priorities and will revise the RAG rating presentation for the next meeting. HR developments include improved sickness rates and a successful bid to become a College of Sanctuary.

#### **Discussion points:**

- Community heritage values to be reflected through naming of re-purposed swimming pool
- Governors pleased with college's proactive strategy in managing funding pressures and maintaining academic quality and student support and emphasis on monitoring outcomes, engagement, and transparency.
- The improvements in apprenticeship performance and retention were particularly noted, alongside the need to raise attendance rates.

#### **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **NOTE THE POSITIVE PROGRESS AGAINST QUALITY AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE KPIS FOR 2024/25**
- **NOTE THE CONTINUED POSITIVE PROGRESS TO FURTHER INFLUENCE THE REPUTATION OF THE COLLEGE AND WIDER SECTOR**
- **MONITOR THE IMPACT OF ONGOING CHANGES TO THE QUALIFICATION AND FUNDING LANDSCAPE**

#### **06.25 STRATEGIC PLAN 2025–2030 AND UPDATED KPIS**

The Principal presented the final Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 and the updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Strategic Plan had been reviewed over several iterations during previous strategic sessions, including the most recent strategic away day. The current version, was presented for formal approval by the Board.

The Strategic Plan 2025–2030 outlines a comprehensive framework structured around the following priority areas:

1. Excellence & Innovation
2. People & Culture
3. Skills & Future Careers -
4. Growth & Sustainability
5. Estate & Facilities

The Principal presented the updated KPIs which were reviewed in detail to ensure alignment with the overarching strategic objectives. The board validated that the KPIs would provide measurable benchmarks to monitor progress across all goal areas over the next five years.

The Principal presented the accountability statement, which had been approved at the end of the previous year. Its alignment with Term 1 progress was confirmed, and it had already been shared with the DfE during the Annual strategic conversation in February.

#### **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **APPROVE THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2025-30**
- **APPROVE THE ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT TERM 1 PROGRESS**

#### **07.25 Policies for Approval**

The DPFR presented three key policies for review and approval:

- **Data Protection Policy:** Reviewed and confirmed as current and effective, with no changes required. It continues to ensure the safeguarding of personal data and compliance with relevant regulations.
- **Freedom of Information Policy:** Confirmed to support institutional transparency and compliance with legislation. The policy effectively outlines procedures for handling information requests and disclosures.
- **Updated Risk Appetite Statement and Risk Management Framework (RAS/RM):** Received detailed scrutiny, with focus on:
  - Risk definitions and categories
  - Mitigation controls and escalation procedures
  - Executive oversight and publishing responsibilities
  - Strategic alignment with governance goals

Board members highlighted the need for consistent escalation practices and clear accountability.

The DPFR confirmed that all three policies:

- Reinforce transparency, accountability, and compliance
- Provide a strong basis for risk management and information security
- Support the college's strategic and governance frameworks.

## **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO APPROVE THE REVISED POLICIES.**

### **08.25 GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

The DoGov presented the Governor Appointments and Membership Report, covering new and renewed appointments, committee changes, and succession planning for key leadership roles.

#### **1. Governor and Co-opted Appointments**

The following were approved by the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee:

- Ms Kathryn Davies (Education policy expert) – appointed Governor and Curriculum & Quality Committee member from 1 September 2025, succeeding Mr Hall.
- Mr Paul Clarke (Senior finance expert) – appointed Governor and Audit & Risk Committee member from 1 April 2025.
- Mr Francis Itoadon (Risk and investment specialist) – appointed as co-opted member of the Audit & Risk Committee from 1 April 2025, to be reviewed annually.
- Mr Michael Eichhorn – following resignation, agreed to continue as co-opted member of the Finance & Resources Committee in a limited capacity.
- Ms Renatta Nzomono – reappointed until 31 July 2026 to support transitional continuity.

#### **2. Membership Resignations and Committee Changes**

Proposed updates to membership and committee structures were presented, contingent on the above appointments, and recommended for approval.

#### **3. Succession Planning**

In light of Mr Abidou's resignation and Mr Butler's plan to step down as Chair in September 2026, a revised succession plan was presented, including:

- Shadowing for potential successors
- A defined transition timeline
- Training and mentoring to ensure leadership readiness

These steps are designed to ensure leadership continuity and maintain strong governance standards through the transition.

## **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO APPROVE:**

- **THE GOVERNOR/ CO-OPTED MEMBERS APPOINTMENTS/RE-APPOINTMENTS**
- **THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CHANGES**
- **THE REVISED SUCCESSION PLAN**

### **09.25 STUDENT GOVERNOR REPORT**

The Student Governor presented a detailed and engaging report, highlighting recent meetings, events and initiative as follows:

- Active participation in AOC Student Governor meeting (themes: leadership, social action).
- Local initiatives: gardening club, Planet Earth Games, bereavement support club.
- Fundraising efforts: 5K run, mayoral charity support.
- Growth in societies with minimal cost.
- Emphasis on fostering a family-like, inclusive environment.

The Board expressed appreciation for the Student Governor's report and affirmed continued support for student-led initiatives, wellbeing services, and inclusive engagement efforts across the college.

## **THE CORPORATION NOTED THE REPORT.**

### **10.25 HR UPDATE**

The DoHR presented a comprehensive update covering recent staffing developments, strategic workforce planning, survey outcomes, and actions to address recruitment and retention challenges. She highlighted the following:

- **Recruitment/Turnover:** Exit data shows departures due to career growth. Recruitment processes refined.
- **Workplace Survey:** Participating in The Sunday Times Best Places to Work; results expected May.
- **Talent Development:** HR system to include new module.
- **Retention Efforts:** Pay award implemented.

#### **Discussion points:**

- Gender pay and inclusivity challenges addressed.
- Discussion on Gen Z expectations and job alignment.
- Emphasis on clarity in role communications and evolving workforce culture.

## **THE CORPORATION NOTED THE REPORT.**

*The DoHR withdrew from the meeting.*

### **11.25 SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT REPORT**

The VP presented a detailed update on safeguarding and prevent measures, with particular focus on the significant rise in safeguarding referrals and the college's response to emerging challenges, especially around mental health. The VP highlighted the following points:

- Sharp rise in referrals (mental health, abuse, crime).
- Issue around Data sharing challenges with schools
- Increased staffing and enhanced tracking systems.
- 100% safeguarding training compliance.
- Safety training and 42 mental health ambassadors appointed.

The Board asked that it be provided with a detailed analysis of mental health referral data, distinguishing between lower-level challenges and severe cases, for further discussion at the next board meeting.

## **THE CORPORATION NOTED THE REPORT.**

*The VP withdrew from the meeting.*

### **12.25 SUBCONTRACTING REPORT**

The DoBIDU presented an update on the college's current subcontracting arrangements, including performance assessments, strategic planning, and compliance oversight. He highlighted the following points:

- No compliance issues with current subcontractors.
- Tendering underway for next academic cycle.
- Strategy aims to reduce overreliance while retaining niche offerings.

While acknowledging the continued necessity of subcontracting for delivering niche or specialist provisions, the Principal reiterated the college's intention to reduce reliance on subcontractors where feasible.

#### **Discussion point:**

Some performance dips were noted and discussed.

## **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **NOTE CURRENT SUBCONTRACTED ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR 2024/2025 AS OF R07.**
- **NOTE THAT THE PROPORTION OF SUBCONTRACTED ACTIVITY BETWEEN PROVIDERS MAY VARY ACCORDING TO STAKEHOLDER DEMAND BUT IS UNLIKELY TO INCREASE IN ITS OVERALL VALUE FOR THE YEAR.**

- **NOTE TIMELINE FOR PROCUREMENT PROCESS**
- **NOTE THE MECHANISMS USED BY THE COLLEGE TO MONITOR AND SUPPORT THE QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE OF ALL SUBCONTRACTED ACTIVITIES.**

*The DoBIDU withdrew from the meeting.*

*The Student Governor withdrew from the meeting.*

### **13.25 CURRICULUM & QUALITY REPORT**

The DPCQ presented a detailed report on curriculum performance, quality assurance, student outcomes, and strategic initiatives, highlighting the following:

- The interim findings of the national Curriculum and Assessment Review confirmed that T Levels will be considered the gold standard for technical education. However, the board stressed the need for flexibility in post-16 qualifications to accommodate diverse learner needs and progression routes.
- There was discussion of sector-wide challenges in post-16 English and maths, particularly concerns over the over-reliance on resit policies and lack of national policy solutions. The November GCSE results in these subjects were disappointing, prompting targeted interventions, including:
  - Enhanced support for students with poor attendance
  - Incentive schemes (e.g., iPad rewards)
  - Improved attendance tracking systems
- The DPCQ emphasised inclusivity, warning against systems that disadvantage students with lower prior attainment. Despite being in the lowest entry quartile, the college has shown strong progress, which should not be undermined by grade-driven approaches.
- A notable safeguarding concern was Ofsted's suggestion that colleges might begin favouring higher-performing applicants, potentially excluding disadvantaged learners, which runs counter to the college's inclusive ethos.
- The report also highlighted significant growth in student enrolment, reflecting successful strategic outreach. The College QIP continues to guide actions aligned with agreed priorities.

#### **Discussion points**

- Inclusive values vs. grade-focus tension.
- Concerns about Ofsted framework proposals and inspection depth.
- Challenges recruiting English and maths staff due to pay gaps.
- Resit fatigue and exam pressure acknowledged.

### **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO NOTE THE PROGRESS ON THE KEY ASPECTS OF CURRICULUM AND QUALITY.**

### **14.25 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2024–25 – MONTHLY MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS (AS OF 31 JANUARY 2025)**

The DPFR presented the monthly financial report for January 2025, assessing the college's income, expenditure, budget forecasts, and key financial risks and opportunities for the remainder of the 2024–25 financial year.

- Surplus revised upwards.
- Financial health: Outstanding.
- Enrolment: 600+ over projection; growth allocation secured.
- Pension overpayments being reviewed.
- Sector-wide KPI changes anticipated from DfE.

#### **Discussion point**

- Strong praise for financial management and forecasting.

#### **THE CORPORATION:**

- **RECEIVED AND NOTED THE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO 31 JANUARY 2025 RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE.**
- **NOTED THE KEY FINANCIAL RISKS BEING MANAGED AND THE MITIGATING ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY THE COLLEGE.**

### **15.25 UPDATE ON CAPITAL PROJECTS**

The DPFR presented the a detailed update on the progress of capital projects, and highlighted the following:

- West Wing Project: Practically completed and delivered on schedule.
- Swimming Pool Project: Successfully completed, on time and within budget. The space has been repurposed for multipurpose student use, including events such as a recent Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) visit.
- Passivhaus also completed, forming part of the college's sustainability objectives.
- The college is currently preparing and submitting capital returns to the Department for Education (DfE).
- Additional monthly financial and audit documentation is being prepared in response to the government's reclassification of capital funds, requiring increased transparency and reporting on how funds are spent.
- All completed projects will undergo separate audits, and the college is ensuring full compliance with DfE requirements.
- A strategic recapitalisation plan for the estate is being developed to prioritise maintenance and capital works based on curriculum needs and energy efficiency (e.g., replacing leaking roofs and inefficient windows).

#### **Discussion points**

- Engineering building redevelopment proposed (energy-efficient, demolish old units).
- Independent condition survey to be commissioned.

### **THE CORPORATION NOTED THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE FECTF PROGRAMME, POST 16 CAPACITY PROJECTS AND LSIF GREEN PROJECT**

#### **16.25 PROGRESS OF SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

The DPFR presented the first comprehensive update on the college's sustainability strategy, highlighting the following:

- An internal audit provided strong assurance on the college's progress in sustainability, which remains a core evaluation criterion in all capital projects. The college is committed to embedding sustainability across its operations, though further progress depends on securing adequate funding.
- A new Director of Estates Projects and Sustainability has been appointed to lead initiatives, including:
  - Oversight of sustainability in the engineering building project
  - Development of efficient maintenance planning
- A sustainability reporting system will be launched next year to monitor curriculum integration, supported by a roadmap of frameworks and benchmarks for institutional improvement. The college aspires to be a sector leader in sustainability, though this is contingent on internal and external resources.
- Student engagement in environmental projects is ongoing and encouraged, with board members affirming the importance of fostering a sustainability-driven culture.
- Current initiatives include:
  - Installing energy-efficient lighting
  - Enhancing waste management systems
  - Embedding sustainability in capital funding decisions.

### **THE CORPORATION NOTED THE REPORT.**

#### **17.25 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE**

The DPFR presented a detailed update on health and safety performance, compliance, risk management, and emergency preparedness initiatives and highlighted the following:.

- The update confirmed that all incidents were investigated and appropriate training measures are in place. An internal audit provided strong assurance of the college's compliance and commitment to high safety standards.
- A recent restaurant inspection resulted in a five-star hygiene rating for the college kitchen, highlighting excellence in food safety.
- As part of business continuity planning, the college is conducting emergency preparedness exercises, including a cyber simulation and lockdown drill, aimed at enhancing readiness and accountability.
- The Audit and Risk Committee will review the outcomes of these exercises to ensure ongoing governance oversight and continuous improvement.

### **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **NOTE THE CONTENTS OF HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE REPORT.**
- **NOTE THE KEY RISKS BEING MANAGED BY THE COLLEGE AND ACTIONS TAKEN.**

### **18.25 RISK MANAGEMENT -REVIEW OF THE UPDATED RISK REGISTER**

The DPFRR provided a detailed update on the College Risk Register, focusing on strategic and operational risks, mitigation measures, and alignment with the college's moderate risk appetite.

- Some risks remain above tolerance levels despite mitigation efforts.
- Cybersecurity and ICT risks are high due to increasing sector threats. The residual cyber risk is at an acceptable medium level, supported by robust controls.
- A cyber simulation exercise is planned to test operational resilience and continuity in crisis scenarios, forming a key part of the college's digital risk mitigation strategy.
- Campus capacity and spatial limitations were flagged as ongoing risks amid growing enrolments.
- Efforts to achieve carbon neutrality are a high priority but currently exceed the accepted risk appetite, requiring accelerated action and long-term infrastructure planning.

The Board emphasised the need to embed sustainability and space planning into the college's strategic development to ensure both operational stability and environmental resilience.

### **THE CORPORATION NOTED THE RISK REGISTER AND THE MITIGATING ACTIONS BEING TAKEN.**

### **19.25 GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN**

The DoGov provided an update on the Governance Action Plan, reviewing progress, current implementation, and planned improvements. Key areas for development include succession planning, training and development, and governor engagement.

- Succession planning has been addressed with the approval of a revised Chair succession plan at this meeting.
- The DoGov will review training initiatives to ensure governors are well-prepared, with a focus on ongoing training, policy updates, and support mechanisms.
- Governor engagement outside meetings remains inconsistent. The Chair reminded governors to participate in at least two non-operational activities annually, such as college or community events.
- To improve participation, the college will provide early notice of events, and revised reporting structures will support better engagement tracking.

### **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO NOTE PROGRESS MADE ON THE GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN 2024-25**

### **20.25 - COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The draft minutes of the Spring Term's Curriculum & Quality, Audit & Risk, and Finance & Resources committees meetings were provided for information.

### **21.25 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No additional items were raised for discussion.

### **22.25 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- **Strategy Day:** Saturday 17 May 2025 Cancelled
- **Corporation Meeting:** Tuesday 8 July 2025

*Staff Governors and staff members withdrew from the meeting.*

### ***Minutes 23.25 -25.25 recorded under Part 2***

The meeting concluded at **21:45**.

**These minutes have been approved by the Corporation as a correct record.**

